

Janie Thompson

Interview



Brigham Young University School of Music
Director of the Program Bureau Directory, 1952–84
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Education

BA, Brigham Young University, 1950

Singer for Big Bands, USO Tours, European Theater

Composer, lyricist, arranger, singer, pianist

Interview with Mike Ohman November 21, 2008

To start, let me paint a picture of what kind of information we desire, and then you can just tell stories. We know you're good at that. Tell us a little bit about how you grew up, your musical talent, where and how it developed, and how it brought you to BYU.

(Note: There is abundant laughter throughout the interview.)

I come from the little Southern Idaho town of Malta. I'm the oldest of seven children. My father was a convert to the Church in England when he was ten years old, and he came to the United States when he was twelve. My mother has always been a member of the Church. The Church has always been the main thing in their lives, and also the main thing in the lives of us children.

Mom and Dad are very, very musical, so we children don't have *any* excuse in our family not to be musical. I'll say that my mother—and I'll say this very conservatively—was the best singer the Lord ever sent down to the earth. As a soprano, she could hit high F above high C with no trouble. Yet she could still go to C below middle C. So she had a huge range. I used to kid her lot: "Come on, Mom, sing 'Old Man River' for us." But that's another story.

She was born in the little town of Huntington, in central Utah, and then the family later moved to Price, Utah. She was called

"the Carbon County Nightingale"—always a wonderful singer. Then she came to Salt Lake City, where she studied for a little while. She was in the Tabernacle Choir, the first in our family to be in the Choir, under Evan Stevens. She was also a soloist with the Choir.

As I said, I have four brothers and two sisters, and every one of us is very talented in music. I think I'm the black sheep of the family; the others are all opera singers. I kind of ended up more in light entertainment. I've always been grateful to be able to do, from a wholesome standpoint, musical entertainment.

My father was raised in England and was converted to the church by missionaries there. Dad was very faithful. My father and my grandpa remind me of Lehi and Nephi. They were that kind of people. Grandpa was from a very wealthy family, and he did a terrible thing when he fell in love a little brown-eyed contralto in the Methodist church choir. He was a fine organist. He was good at anything that had to do with the fine arts. He was not very good at practical things.

Anyway, he fell in love with my grandmother. It turned out that she was a maid at somebody's house, which was a no-no. My great-grandmother was absolutely devastated that my father would fall in love with somebody whose stature in life was beneath his. (I hope I'm not judging my great-grandmother—she was a grand

lady.) But my grandfather's marriage to my grandmother disappointed the family.

Then, when the elders came and taught my grandparents the gospel, they accepted it, and that did it. We've all heard the story of converts being thrown out of their families. It was one of those stories. My grandparents didn't have much financially, but they had a lot of faith and wanted to come to Zion.

My father was actually born in Cleveland, Ohio. His family was there long enough for him to be born, and then they went back to England, because my grandmother's mother was ill. Then they came back to the United States, to Murray, Utah, because the missionaries who had baptized them lived there. As I said, they came to Utah when my dad was about twelve years old. The last one of their children was born in Utah, the others in England. The family had no money, so they asked if they could pitch a tent on the missionary's lawn and camp out till my grandfather could find a job. A good man who became a family friend forever, Orson Sanders, had a ranch in a small southern Idaho town. He offered my grandfather a job there.

My grandfather knew nothing about ranching. The family lived in a log cabin that had a dirt floor and dirt roof. By the way, I was not born in that cabin, though I *was* born in another log cabin. (So I have something in common with Abraham Lincoln.) Dad and the family moved to Almo, Idaho, where they lived a very sparse life. But they were happy, because they had the gospel. Grandma had one dress, which she wore all week, washed on Saturday, and wore to church on Sunday. That's how they lived.

When my dad was old enough to go on a mission, it looked like he would have to go into the army, because World War II was raging. The war ended just in time for him not to have to go. So he was called on a mission.

The family could not afford to send him on a mission, so the Almo ward sent him. He was always very grateful for that.

At the same time, my mother, living in Price, Utah, got the idea to go on a mission. She went, and that's where my parents met—in Independence, Missouri, in what was called the Central States Mission. My mother was such good a singer, and so was my dad—a very good bass. Dad was a musician who had taught himself—how to play the violin, how to play a saxophone. He was good that way. Mother could out-sing anybody in the whole world—something I don't mind saying.

A year after they were released from their missions, they realized that they had fallen in love, so they ended up getting married and moving to Idaho. My father felt a great gratitude to the ward for sending him on his mission, so he felt he should always put his time and talents back into that area. I think my dad could have been a wealthy man if he'd been somewhere else. But he was so devoted to his ward that he went back to Idaho.

My parents finally moved to Malta, Idaho. My mother had come from a fairly well off middle-class family in Price, Utah, and they owned a great big, heavy, upright piano, so heavy you could hardly budge it. Her family gave my mother that piano. So when we kids started to arrive, our parents

didn't have the money to pay for lessons for us, but they had an instrument.

I think it's important to let young couples know that: If you can't afford those things, you can't hold talent down. If it's in your person or family you can help it out, if you at least have an instrument—maybe a guitar, a piano, or something.

We had the piano, and from the time I was big enough to reach up (think of the image of "Kilroy was here") and kind of finger around on the piano, picking out little tunes, that's what I did. I really didn't take any lessons until I was about eight years old. I remember when I could pick out pieces with my right hand—the melody and even a little harmony. But I didn't know what to do with the left hand. Then I thought, *Everybody plays with two hands. Why can't I?* Then I thought to myself, *Why don't you?!*

Then, *If this chord sounds good up here, then the same notes will sound good down there.* I noticed that those keys were all replicas of each other. So I would pick out a little bass part, and I finally put a little song together. I was only five.

We all know how dads are: they think you're a genius. All the people in our little town of Malta, Idaho, were a little astounded. It was a really "big" town of about 250 people. I remember thinking to myself that the people were pretty dumb, because in my mind it was such an easy thing now to play with both hands. But I didn't let people know how easy it was. I love the attention it brought to me.

That's how things began.

Then a lady from Oakley (where Newell Dayley was born) would come over on Saturdays and give us lessons. So I finally got to take some lessons—but only for about a year, though. (I took more lessons for another year when I came to BYU, so I could major in music. Times were different then, you know. We did the best that we could.)

We had some fine musicians in Malta. A couple of families helped out with the music and taught me a lot.

My brothers and sisters and I kind of suspected that there was a world out there somewhere, but we really weren't too sure about it. I have to say that I never got as excited going to New York City, or Chicago, or Rio, or Tokyo, or Paris—you name it—as I used to when going to Burley, thirty miles from Malta. That was a *big* city to me (about the size of American Fork). It was really exciting to go to Burley.

There was never any question in any of our minds where we would go to college, if we could figure out how. There was no place like BYU—that was the "Church school." My father became the postmaster in Malta, but he only made a pittance of a salary. He had to do all kinds of other things to support his large family. Our mother found some plan from the good old Montgomery-Ward catalogue, something that would build into a scholarship. She worked on that till she got me a scholarship so I could go to school at BYU the first year.

My tuition for the fall quarter of 1939 was \$32.00. Then I worked my way through school, playing the piano. I played for all the dance classes. There were no records

in those days, so I played for folk dancing, ballroom dancing, tap dancing, creative dancing, and Orchesis, and all kinds of things—I did it all.

I worked quite a bit for Miss Burton, the main dance teacher. When I was a sophomore, she took me to a dance convention held in Reno, Nevada. All the western schools were there—UCLA, USC, and other coast schools. And also BYU. They all had their dance groups, and the minute they found out that I could improvise—that I could sit and make up music on the piano, at the same time they were making up the dances on the dance floor (I just followed them and did what they were doing)—I ended up playing for USC and other schools. That was a fun experience.

That's how I worked my way through BYU. Sometimes I played as long as ten hours a day, till I wrecked the little nerves in my wrist. Even now in my old age I have to be careful, though I don't let it stop me very much.

I loved BYU with a passion. I kind of learned my trade through extracurricular activities. That's also how I learned about entertainment. (There were no roadshows then. It wasn't till just before I was on the General Board of the MIA that roadshows started.)

It may be of interest to know that I never had much confidence in myself. I thought I was an ugly duckling. (I was right.) The only thing I could really do better than anybody else was music. As I say, I started BYU in 1939 and graduated in 1943. World War II wasn't over till 1945. BYU was nothing but a girls' school for a while. I had found that I could write arrangements and teach others to do

things, even if I didn't do them myself. Not as a teacher, just as a student.

There used to be three assemblies held at BYU every week. One was a devotional, one was a forum, and one was a student assembly. The last was the grandest thing in the world for me. I learned a lot from being involved in them. I could organize those assemblies, write and hide behind all that was going on and not have to show what a scaredy-cat I was about everything.

Then the Army had what was called the ASTP (Army Specialized Training Program). Fellows in the service were brought to different universities to get more education, so they could become engineers or whatever was needed. So the army sent to BYU 250 cadets from back east. They were smart; they had high IQs. I felt sorry for them, because I thought, *This must be like a jumping-off place in the world for them, because you can't smoke, you can't drink, you can't swear.* There wasn't even a coffee pot in the cafeteria. I wanted to do something to build up their morale so I started putting many of them in student assemblies, floor shows, and other fun activities. They enjoyed that.

Here's something funny. We had a fifty-year reunion with that bunch back in 1994. They came because they loved BYU. I was surprised that they came, and they paid their own way. Two or three had even joined the Church.

One cute young fellow—Frank Germane (I called him Germie), who was taller than Mickey Rooney, but not a whole lot—reminded me of Johnny Mercer because he sang like him. He had a cute personality. He and others found out that I could sing by accident. My roommates and I had a basement apartment. A young couple

with a baby owned the house and lived upstairs. My roommates were popular girls, and the cadets liked them. They would come down to our place after a dance or ballgame or something that was going on. There they were, making noise. I thought we girls were going to get kicked out of our apartment. "We're going to lose our place."

So I started to play the piano. That didn't stop the talking, but when I started to sing, everybody would shut up. I could pretend I was by myself, because the piano faced the wall, and so I faced the wall. I could just pretend that I was all alone. It was at night and we had a great big fireplace along the side of the room. We'd fire it up, and the only other light we had was a blue light. Yes, it sounds kind of risqué. In fact, we called it "Blue-light Session." But it was only Janie singing and playing the piano, and everybody else shutting up and listenin'. That's how they found out that I could sing.

There were some pretty good musicians in that bunch, and they put together a marching band. (I have some pictures of them somewhere.) The band would march up to the flagpole and play "The Star-Spangled Banner" while the flag went up. Then the same thing would happen in the evening when the flag came down.

There were also some good jazz musicians in that band, so they wanted to put together a dance band. And they did. They didn't know whether the student body would like them or wouldn't. They asked me if I would sing with them. They kept asking, "How'd you learn to sing like that?!" I didn't even know how I did, because back in Malta, Idaho we couldn't

even afford a radio for a long time. (My idol was Ella Fitzgerald.)

I wanted so bad to sing for their band—no one will *ever* know how badly I wanted to do that. But I didn't have the nerve. I did not. I could not make myself do it. So I turned them down.

Then they did a very smart thing. They asked a girl to sing who was everything that I wasn't: she was beautiful, she was talented, she could play the piano better than I could. (I thought that was really unfair!) She could sing, though I doubted any better than I could, but she had courage. So they asked her. "Sure, I'll do it," she said.

So she sang, and I sat—and oh, I cried. That's one time when my jealousy got bigger than my "scare".

Afterwards, the band was excited because they were invited to play the next week. I knew that this singer had been committed for only that one dance, so I went up the band—and I knew I'd have to do it in a hurry. I hesitatingly said, about ten times, "Well, if you really want me . . . if you still want me . . . I guess I'll do it . . . if you really want me."

They said, "Okay, Janie, you're on. You'll sing next week."

Then I shivered and I shook for a whole week. I didn't know if I could make myself do it. When the time came, I was so wobbly—but I knew I had to do it, since I'd asked them myself.

The band was playing the introduction to my first song, "The Man I Love"—a nice ballad. I started in pretty weakly, but I

kept going. I got through it. Guess what happened? The best looking fellow on that floor came up to me and said, "Janie, you sound just like Ella Fitzgerald."

I was dumbfounded—but I didn't believe him. I knew that *nobody* sounds like Ella Fitzgerald, including me. But that's all it took. You couldn't shut me up after that. I was off to the races.

I got enough courage to audition for Dob Orton's band, which was playing where the post office is now. That used to be a dance hall. They played there in the wintertime and in an open-air dance hall in the summertime. Dob hired me, so I sang in the winter and the summer with that orchestra.

Now I was getting all kinds of confidence. Then a notice came out in the Salt Lake newspaper of a man who was auditioning people to perform for the USA to go overseas.

I'm telling this story because there may be people who are going through what I did—extreme fright of trying to do anything—but don't give up. Something might happen—and it did happen to me.

I went to Salt Lake City and auditioned. This fellow could tell that I had a lot of talent. But he could also tell that I had very little experience. I'd just been singing with a band, and you don't have to put a big ending on with a band. They play the introduction, you sing, then they play a chorus, and you come in again, and the band puts on the ending.

The man said, "If you go to San Francisco, we've got a big organization up and down the coast. We will give you a lot of experience, and *then* we'll hire you."

I'd just graduated, so I thought that was a good plan. My sister Dorothy, two years younger than me (born on my birthday), was a WAAC, and she was stationed at Angel Island, in the San Francisco Bay. So I thought, "I'll go there."

The first time I sang for something, I sang "The GI Jive"—a very popular song at the time—and I was really jiving away, playing the piano for myself. When I got to the end, I just stopped. Hardly anybody applauded.

I was sick, broken-hearted. Then I realized—I started listening to what other people were doing, and they had slam-bang endings. It didn't take me long to fix that problem. Then I was kind of, shall I say, wowing my audiences! I was flown all up and down the coast.

Soon, along came another thing: Civilian Actors Technician Service (CATS) (not the USO). They wanted people to entertain the army of occupation in Europe. The war was over, and the guys wanted to come home—"The war's over. Why do we have to still be here?"

But they had to be there, because Germany was a conquered country, and we were the army of occupation. Everybody was in the service—everybody! Even movie stars like Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, and others. And so was Mickey Rooney, who was in Europe. There was great talent everywhere, because everybody was in the service. In fact, Glen Miller was there with his own band, because it was either join the service or be drafted so his whole band joined up. That band was such a big hit that it really built up the morale of the boys. He got his men transferred to be together, and then he augmented the band. He had a 75-piece

band. He arranged and played the "St. Louis Blues March," which was such a hit.

The CATS wanted some girls to add to the male talent already in the service in Europe and provide more and better entertainment for the troops, so they auditioned in only a few cities—San Francisco, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, and New York City. A hundred girls would be picked to go over to Europe who could do more than just sing or dance. They could help organize. When I read about that, I thought, "That is something I could do." I had a little more courage by then. I also had a job in the daytime. When I showed a friend who worked with me the newspaper article advertising the tour, she said, "You've got to do that!" She took me out in the hall, put a nickel in the phone (a phone call only cost a nickel then), and called up CATS. I talked to them. They said, "Well, we're filled up. We really can't squeeze another person in."

I kept talking, and the more I talked, the more the woman warmed up. "You sound like what we want," she finally said. "We'll put you in on Saturday." The audition was in Oakland, and I didn't know how to find the place. It took me from eight o'clock in the morning to two o'clock in the afternoon to finally get there.

When I got there and looked in, there were about three hundred girls, all gorgeous, all with big, long lists of professional stuff they'd done! All I'd ever done was MIA and BYU. I just about turned around and left, but then I thought, *Well, I took all this time to get here, I'm going to go through with it.*

There were some boys in the back of the auditorium—four servicemen who were covering this story for their newspaper,

which went up and down the whole West Coast, a newspaper similar to the *Stars and Stripes*. I saw them there, but I didn't pay that much attention to them.

I rushed down to the front and said, "I have a real difficulty. I've got a USO show at four o'clock, and I've got to get back, and it took me all this time to get here. Can I get on right away?"

They said, "All right, we'll let you on."

So I raced up on the stage. There was a piano at the back. I pulled it around, because I wasn't going sing with my back to people. A man came up and said, "I'll help you, if you'll wait a minute." But I didn't have time to wait.

I sat down and started in: "GI Jive" again, because I knew my big ending. All four boys came down from the back row to the front row, and they were smiling and jiving right along with me all through the number. In those days, I always took my glasses off—I was very vain. But I could see their smiles, even without my glasses on. I wasn't afraid anymore, because I had a responsive audience.

When I got through, the servicemen stayed right there. I happened to have a letter from Dr. T. Earl Pardoe. I'd done something for him, and he said, "Janie, I'm going to write you a letter. You're going to need it."

Backing up, I didn't even know Dr. Pardoe at BYU very well. I'd never taken a class from him or anything, though I did direct the Varsity Show that year. I had written the music for it, and that's how he got to know me. He was the faculty advisor. Rolph Peterson, a student vice president at

BYU, was the chairman of the show. He's the one who had written a two-act musical play, and he had asked me to write the music for it. I said, *I could do that—but don't ask me to direct it*. I told him I'd never directed anything like that. He said, "I won't ask you to."

Then suddenly I got a letter from him. He was in the Navy. His draft number had come up. He didn't want to be drafted, so he joined the Navy. He wrote, "Sorry, you'll have to direct the show. You can do it, good luck."

It was a good thing, because it got me acquainted with Doctor Pardoe, who was so nice. He didn't try to push his ideas onto me. He was just there to kind of advise us, if we wanted help. He actually had some great ideas that helped a lot. He and I became great friends, and that's why he wrote me the letter. "You're going to need it," he'd told me. It was what I needed: a character-type of reference. I just threw the letter at the man who was doing the auditioning: "Here's this letter."

He said, "Wait, we want you do more songs and take a picture with this New York actress." It was Peggy Wood. I thought it was her, but I didn't dare ask, "Who'd you say that was?"

They took the picture, and I did one or two more numbers.

Those boys were still sitting there, but I said, "I cannot stay any longer. I have to go."

The boys asked me, "Do you need a ride?"

I said, relieved, "Yes." (I had no idea how I'd get back in time.)

"We've got a staff car. We'll take you where you need to go."

They solved the problem: they got me where I needed to go on time and made a classic remark to me, which I'll never forget: "Baby, you've got it!" (I say that modestly.)

This is what got my big career going.

Three of the girls from San Francisco, including myself, were called to go overseas, along with girls from other areas. Julie Mitchum (movie star Robert Mitchum's sister) was one of them. We became very good friends. We could both play the piano and sing, so we entertained on the boats all the way across the ocean. (She helped me get my job with Ike Carpenter when I returned from Europe, and I sang with his band for two years. Her sister was his singer and was getting married, so she knew there was an opening.)

I was overseas a couple of months short of two years. We had to sign up for a year. I fell in love with a talented soldier from New York (we wrote a show together). He was one of the most talented fellows I've ever known in my life, but he didn't know anything about standards. He was very funny. He wrote my roommate, "Well, yesterday I quit smoking. Today I quit drinking. Tomorrow I'll quit breathing." He would send money home to my brother, who was on a mission. I tried to teach him the gospel, but he just laughed at the Moroni story. He just wasn't for it.

He finally realized I was never going to marry him outside of the Church. That was something I really couldn't do. I've had two serious romances I couldn't follow through on because of that. Another

romance was a returned missionary, but we didn't have anything in common but the Church. We just sort of bored each other. So that didn't work out, but I guess I couldn't have done all I've done had I been married.

As I said, there were only three of us called to go to Europe out of that great big mob of girls who auditioned in San Francisco. I wrote a show with a young man named Johnny who was a very good lyricist. He could even write a little music, but it was better for him to write the lyrics and me to write the music. He laughed his head off at my lyrics; he thought they were so corny. I learned a lot from him, because I'd never paid much attention to lyrics, because I *sang* the music. I had a talent that I could put *across* the lyrics, as if I knew what I was talking about. I finally had to quit singing some songs when I finally started listening to what I was saying. Mickey Rooney taught me that lesson: he was hanging over the piano while I was singing away: [sings] "I surrender, Dear . . ."—an old jazz classic.

I had not a thought about what I was saying, but Mickey Rooney got the message. He tried to date me. I did double-date with him one time. But he expected me to deliver, on the words to the song. That's what got me to thinking: "I'd better start listening to what I'm singing." Then I was absolutely dumbfounded at some of the good old jazz classics that I was singing. I had to quit singing them. One was not a jazz classic, but a fun song that I learned in Europe. It was all French in the middle. I learned the French, and did it ever go over. The men stomped their feet and whistled. I thought, "Wow, am I good!"

Then I got someone to tell me what the French meant, and I was mortified. There was no longer hope for that song. I just had to quit singing it. (I've since put the tune and words out of my mind.)

I did get so I could write lyrics, and I think I'm better now at lyrics than music.

All these experiences were preparing me for my work at BYU. I was ready, and I've kept the kids toeing the mark when it came to those kinds of lyrics.

Johnny (the talented serviceman) and I became quite a team. He was a real pro. He was a child star on Broadway and even made a movie in Hollywood with Lucille Ball called "Best Foot Forward" just prior to going into the army. We wrote songs and performed together in many shows. He even took his discharge from the military in Europe so he could stay with me. He couldn't stand to leave me. He finally went home in February, 1949, and I signed on clear to June, so I wouldn't have every memory mixed up with him. I never thought I'd ever get to Europe again—ha, ha, ha.

All of us who had been auditioned and sent to Europe were civilians, but we were under the protection of the armed forces. We were given all the privileges of the rank of an officer—we could go in to the PX's and live in the billets, and so on.

While Johnny and I were together putting on the show that we had written, the commanding general, General Bowling, wanted to form a big band to replace Glen Miller's big band. He had been there when the war was on, and also when Glen Miller was there. Miller was killed in 1944, and now it was 1946. He couldn't find anybody with a

famous name, but he had an excellent warrant officer, Lin Arison who couldn't have been better. The general gave Lin the authority to audition anybody in the entire European theater. That meant London, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Vienna—everywhere there were American troops.

So the general had the *best* musicians possible, so good, in fact, that it was called "America's Band"—a very big band, like a small orchestra, even with a string section, French horns, flutes, a reed section, and other instruments, to go with the regular brass, rhythm, and saxophone sections in big bands. It was far ahead of its time. They were great.

I got a letter—an order, not a request—to come and audition. I was kind of excited about that, because I always loved being with big bands. Two male singers and two female singers were selected, because this was a big deal, not a dinky thing. The broadcasts were every week in the Wiesbaden Opera House, in Wiesbaden, Germany. Only the front of that opera house had been damaged by the bombing. Everything else was in perfect condition.

The U.S. troops were good in that way during the war. If they knew a target was an artistic type of city, they tried to avoid damaging it. If it was a manufacturing type of city, the U.S. flattened it good. For example, Heidelberg and Mannheim were only ten miles apart. Heidelberg wasn't touched. That's where the *Student Prince*, the University of Heidelberg and other great musical things happened. Mannheim was a great manufacturing center, and it was smashed flat.

The Wiesbaden Opera House was beautiful, and we had fun there. I had my own

dressing room. The other girl was Judy Brines, and the boys were Bob Lawrence and Tony Bennett. Tony was not known by that name then; he was Anthony Dominick Benedetto. He changed his name then, because he was very serious about becoming a professional. He was only nineteen years old, but he could really sing. He took the name Joe Bari—I always thought that that was his name, so I always called him that. He and I got to sing some duets together.

After the broadcast was over, we did a stage show to entertain for another hour. Guys would stand in line two blocks or more to get in, because there were sometimes famous stars in the show. Paulette Goddard was our first star. We also had musical Broadway stars, other movie stars, recording stars, even opera stars such as Grace Moore and Lawrence Tibbett.

By the way—and I'm being modest again—I got more encores than Tony Bennett did. Because I did lots of cute, novelty songs. I'd just be turned loose on the piano, and I'd get six or seven encores every night.

One time when we were in Bad Homburg, I got a corsage from five guys—five different orchids put together. The note said, "Janie, please sing 'St. Louis Blues.' Five admiring GIs." I was excited to oblige.

We sometimes broadcast from the Wiesbaden Opera House, but we did go once in a while to other cities, for example, Paris, France. We also got to go to Berlin; it was the only time when all five countries—Britain, France, Germany, the U.S., and the Soviet Union—were on good enough terms to get along. Each country flew in their bands to be on the show. The Soviets

flew in a band with twelve tubas for dancing. Our band represented the United States, and I was the only girl vocalist.

Tony Bennett only lasted about three months. Then it was time for him to go home. Some years later, I was in New York City, where I'd met a piano player, Phil Stringer, the one who wrote "So Little We Know" for Frank Sinatra; and "Santa Baby," a big hit for Eartha Kitt. I accidentally ran into Phil on the street as I was going to get on a bus. He stopped me and said, "Janie, this is Phil." We stood there on the corner in New York and couldn't talk fast enough. He told me about how he'd been with Tony Bennett.

I said, "Oh, that's nice."

Later, he mentioned Tony Bennett again, and I got curious.

I said, "How do you know Tony Bennett?"

He looked at me with astonishment and said, "Jamie, don't you know that Joe Bari is Tony Bennett!?"

Then it was my turn to look at him with astonishment. I said, "What? I know Tony Bennett?!?" I could hardly believe it.

It was Bob Hope that changed Tony Bennett's name. He said he shouldn't go by Joe Bari. "Change Benedetto to Bennett and Anthony to Tony—Tony Bennett." It turned out to be a very good name for him.

Tony Bennett is a good man, five years younger than I am. He does not forget his old friends. I was with him about three months, and what a career he's had. He put me in his book, "The Good Life," three times. That he would remember me is a miracle, I think. But he does remem-

ber me. I have a good picture of the two of us. I got to be with him again in the year 2000, when he performed in Salt Lake City in Symphony Hall and invited my family and me to attend.

He also invited my family and me to the Green Room after the concert. I knew he wouldn't have an idea of what I looked like, or anything. In fact, I was surprised he remembered me at all. My nephew, David Acheson, stepped up just as I was about to tell Tony who I was and said, "Tony, this is Janie Thompson."

Tony said, "Janie Thompson!" and then he gave me the biggest hug. You can put on a pretty good act—I do it all the time. (And I don't know as many people as he does, but I know enough people that I cannot remember who they all are.) I think it's the rudest thing if anybody comes up and says, "Remember me?" Then you stand on one foot and then the other, hoping they'll give you a clue. Finally you figure out something to say.

But Tony said enough that I knew he wasn't faking that he remembered me. We had a wonderful visit.

He invited me again in 2007 when he appeared in Deer Valley near Park City, UT. I couldn't go, but he'd given me the tickets—\$120 apiece. For health reasons, I cannot go up in the mountains. I just sit in the valley and look at them and appreciate them. My dad went through this, and I'm getting there. I can't fly airplanes anymore. It just sets my head off something terrible. My father suffered the same way the four years before his death. I don't want to go through it.

Terry O'Brien, one of my former BYU performers contacted one of Tony